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Classified By: Charge d' Affairs Mark A. Taplin for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. After languishing on the political backburner, the exposure and lustration of Ceausescu-era secret police agents and collaborators has become a white-hot

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political issue this summer. Some observers speculate that the Liberal party (PNL) could benefit most from the lustration flap, and that President Basescu,s Democratic Party (PD) is most vulnerable, in part since other parties may have already selectively cleansed or altered files relating to their members. The issue will likely continue to snowball as politicians, media, and well-connected bureaucrats with access to secret files pile on. It has already claimed two high-profile targets and now threatens to engulf many in the generation of politicians with roots dating back to the Ceausescu era. The focus of the scandal has moved in recent days to President Basescu, who has hung tough by denying direct collaboration with the Securitate and by declaring that he had only done "what he had to do" during communist rule. End Summary.

12. (C) Lustration has finally reached front-page news in Romania -- sixteen years late. A process to bring to light the files of Romania's secret police, the Securitate, in order to identify the collaborators and agents of the communist government, has long been anticipated. However, unlike several other Eastern European countries where lustration commenced soon after the revolutions of 1989, key Romanian political figures and the intelligence services themselves have long delayed lustration and have actively meddled in its implementation ever since a 1999 law mandated it. (The center-right Constantinescu government established the National College for the Study of Securitate Archives (CNSAS) to grant Romanian citizens access to their own files and to determine and make public the identities of the Securitate's agents and collaborators.)

Tale of Two Lustrations -- Voiculescu, Musca

13. (C) The lustration issue has already claimed two high-profile targets, Conservative Party President Dan Voiculescu and Liberal Party MP (and outspoken critic of PM Tariceanu) Mona Musca, along with a host of second-rung political figures and officials whose names have been linked to the Securitate in recent weeks. The difference in the background to the two cases underlines the perils for Romanian political life in the chaotic unmasking process that is now unfolding. On the one hand, Voiculescu's past collaboration with the Securitate was well enough established in the public mind before the latest revelations that confirmation of his Securitate role under the codename

"Felix" hardly came as a surprise. When the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI) sent two papers from his file to CNSAS for study, they were immediately leaked to the press. Based on the additional information, the CNSAS ruled Voiculescu had been involved in "political policing." The CNSAS also confirmed Voiculescu's communist-era foreign trading firm was indeed a Securitate front company. Voiculescu's ambition to assume one of the then vacant Vice-Premier jobs was thus stymied. In light of Voiculescu's unsavory reputation, the result was at least arguably all for the best.

14. (C) On the other hand, the news that widely admired PNL parliamentarian Mona Musca, one of the country's most popular political figures and Basescu ally, had signed an agreement with the Securitate to inform on foreign students to whom she was teaching Romanian in the nineteen-seventies, did set off shock waves. Musca, ironically, had been one of the most vocal proponents of the lustration law. Musca subsequently claimed she had signed only for the "protection" of her students. Her files include the 1977 letter where she committed herself to the "patriotic job of supporting the Securitate organs with data and information regarding the problems of foreign students' studies and their eventual enemy attitudes towards our State." The mauling that she received in the Romanian press, and at the hands of her political rivals, has underscored the fact that this summer's lustration, Romanian-style, remains highly politicized, sometimes akin to outright character assassination. The fact that Musca's opponents within the PNL moved quickly to condemn her and call for her resignation from the party undoubtedly had as much to do with her past criticisms of Prime Minister and PNL president Tariceanu as with any sense of moral outrage about her past Securitate associations.

15. (C) In a meeting with PolChief August 15, Musca maintained
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that the CNSAS would ultimately clear her of the charge of "collaboration," as she did not report on the private lives of her students and did not gain any advantage from her actions. Musca, an outspoken parliamentary proponent of civil society and human rights for the past decade, said she "did not harm human rights." Under the Ceausescu regime, Musca asserted, all teachers working with foreign students had to sign similar pledges. She added that she had, in fact, turned down invitations to become a Communist Party member on three separate occasions.

16. (C) Musca expressed the hope that this political "maneuver" would not affect the proper implementation of the lustration law. It was important for Romania, she said, to open up the files of its communist past, adding that Romania lacked a transparent and predictable process for lustration. She lamented that to date, instead, only certain people's pasts had been revealed and that the media appeared eager to weigh in prior to the judgment of the CNSAS. Musca argued the lustration process needed to be simplified, time-limited, and aimed at uncovering who were the decision makers of the police state. She also argued that lustration needed to be coupled to disclosure of the financial interests of all individuals in public life. Musca described Romanian politics as composed of many "nodes of interests" with political or economic power that were impossible to break. Only individuals outside those "nodes" were being lustrated.

17. (C) In fact, the lustration process does not appear to be under the control of any single political actor or party, and the snowball effect the Securitate file revelations has engendered is transforming the political landscape of the country in unpredictable ways as politicians, media, and well-connected bureaucrats with access to secret files pile on. PM Tariceanu August 18 dismissed State Secretary Dan Petrescu on grounds that he used to be a Securitate officer, and over the past weekend, Ioan Talpes, the former National Security Advisor under former President Iliescu, warned that

the Romanian political scene would be rocked by a new wave of revelations when a new archive of 71 recently-discovered Securitate dossiers are made public in the coming weeks.

Storm Over Cotreceni Palace

18. (C) The lustration storm moved over Cotreceni Palace last week, when the head of the CNSAS, Claudiu Secasiu, commented on the status of the CNSAS's investigation into President Basescu's ties to the Securitate, based on a request from former President Emil Constantinescu, a bitter Basescu critic. Secasiu said that only the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI) had responded thus far, with a report denying that it had any such files. Secasiu said he now awaited replies from the other two repositories for Securitate files, the External Intelligence Service (SIE) and the Defense Ministry (MOD). Basescu dismissed the accusations, saying he had only done "what he had to do" during communist rule. While Basescu denied collaborating with the Securitate, he acknowledged that he, like all other ship captains, wrote regular reports regarding activities on board the ship that he commanded, and that these reports "might have been of interest to the Securitate."

19. (C) Even prior to the recent media frenzy, Presidential Counselor for Political Affairs Claudiu Saftoiu warned EmbOffs that the lustration process was "out of control." He argued that Basescu's Democrats were most vulnerable because the Securitate files of rival parties such as the Social Democratic Party had already been selectively cleansed to remove incriminating evidence. Saftoiu opined that it was the Prime Minister's PNL that would benefit most from the campaign to open the files. Saftoiu asserted that, in contrast to former President Iliescu, who would exercise political control through the intelligence services whenever he wanted, Basescu was attempting to get the services to work for "principles," rather than "for him personally." Saftoiu commented that Basescu's interest in the twists and turns of Ukraine's political scene stemmed in part from the conviction that Romania faced a similar internal dynamic, with many of Romania's richest and most influential figures (he cited Dan Voiculescu, George Copos, Dinu Patriciu, and Ovidiu Vantu) pursuing their agendas in tandem with Russian interests. Chamber of Deputies President Bogdan Olteanu, a PNL member, gave us a slightly different take, noting to DCM and PolChief that selectively cleansing or tampering with Securitate files was unlikely given the penchant of the agency to keep multiple copies of files. Olteanu (born in 1971) evinced confidence that the lustration process would accelerate a generational change in Romanian politics. As the lustration issue unfolded, there would be pressure on all political parties to clean house. He said the only possible exception

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was the PSD, where the new leadership of Mircea Geoana (and the depth of resistance from old-line party leaders) was still an open question.

110. (C) Still others suspect the trail of the Securitate files leads back to the Presidential palace, or point their finger at Basescu as a prime offender himself. And while PM Tariceanu publicly offered the President the benefit of the doubt, many of Basescu's political enemies from the Social Democrats to the extreme nationalists continued to attack his claim that he had never collaborated with the Securitate. The recently exposed Voiculescu and his Conservative Party (PC), for one, have laid the blame for what is now being widely called the "Dosariada" squarely on Basescu and announced loudly that they will no longer cooperate with him and the PC's erstwhile coalition partner, the Democratic Party (PD). A political cartoon in a top daily (perhaps not coincidentally one owned by Voiculescu) shows an impatient Basescu first complaining about being bored by a summer without political scandal, then setting off to inspect the Securitate archives. Facing a wall full of files, he asks:

"What are these?" "Pandora's box, Mr. President," comes the reply. "Then let's open it!" he cries.

CNSAS - License to Lustrate

¶11. (C) Although the center-right government's 1999 law created CNSAS, it began functioning only after the Social Democratic Party, made up of many former Communists, won the 2000 elections. The PSD obstructed the functioning of CNSAS, often using as a pretext the intelligence services' refusal to release Securitate archives. Then-PM Nastase stated on many occasions that he did not see the necessity for the CNSAS and that Romanians should look to their future rather than their past. Apart from revealing the collaboration of a handful of relative unknowns, the CNSAS largely focused on allowing average Romanians to see their personal files. It also took some controversial decisions, such as clearing ultra-nationalist PRM president Corneliu Vadim Tudor of collaboration with the Securitate, despite acknowledging the Council lacked access to all relevant documents.

¶12. (C) A few months after being elected President, Basescu forced the intelligence agencies and the MOD to hand over to CNSAS the entire Securitate archive, apart from about 100,000 files of continuing concern to "national security." In March 2006, following PM Tariceanu's amending of the law establishing CNSAS, a new CNSAS board was elected. The ensuing political battle between the Democrats and Liberals prevented the initiator of the CNSAS law, Ticu Dumitrescu, from leading the institution he long advocated. Instead, Corneliu Turianu was elected according to the Democratic Party's proposal, causing the Liberals to claim the Democrats had not stuck to their "shared decisions." The following day, the vice president of CNSAS resigned after reportedly receiving death threats aimed at his children. President Basescu then proposed that the elections be repeated and, in mid August, the two parties agreed on a compromise candidate, Claudiu Secasiu, a member of the outgoing CNSAS board. Basescu opened up the archives further during a July meeting of the Supreme Council for National Defense, when he led the decision to declassify all the files of "national interest" regarding all politicians. SRI began handing over these files to CNSAS in early August, starting with 29 files, mainly revealing surveillance targets but also including some files concerning individuals who collaborated with the Securitate.

¶13. (C) Comment: Romania has yet to come to terms with its past, in part because practically every major political figure since the 1989 revolution was tainted to some degree with links to the ubiquitous Securitate. It would be surprising if past Romanian political leaders -- some like Iliescu and Nastase men of the Communist apparatus itself -- have not already done their level best to expunge their Securitate records. Like a crime scene left open to the elements and passersby, the documentary record represented by the Securitate archives are already of questionable "forensic" value, whatever their historic significance. There are contemporary ironies, too. While lustration has ostensibly been a joint PNL-PD project, the institutional heavy lifting for the release of Securitate files was done by President Basescu. The political benefits, however, are for the moment being reaped more by the PNL, including PM Tariceanu. While Basescu clearly recognizes the worst offenders from the Ceausescu era may never be brought to light under the ongoing lustration process, he appears to be still committed to the process, if that is not too coherent a word for what increasingly resembles one of last summer's devastating flash floods rather than a cleansing summer

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shower. Some of our contacts, including PSD leader Geoana are of the cynical view that the outcome of the lustration issue will be less about coming to terms with Romania's past than with settling political scores, and that the issue will

become more complicated as a multiplicity of "invisible hands" work out their various agendas. The lustration issue not only lays bare the different interests of competing parties and personalities, but also reveals the generational cleavage between political figures with roots in the Ceaucescu era and a successor generation untainted by links to the Securitate. As more and more political figures trudge uncomfortably to the CSNAS headquarters, in full view of the cameras, the potential for the landscape of Romanian politics to be transformed in fundamental ways grows more likely.

End comment.

Taplin